

# **Immersed in Devotion... Sunday, January 24, 2021 Taizé**

## **Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Opening Prayer** – Sherri will set the intention to open heart and mind, welcoming whatever is to be awakened today.

## **Introduction –Diana**

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. I begin today by welcoming you Home...Home to our Community, and Home to your own Mystic Heart.

I invite you now to get comfortable and settle into the stillness of Taizé, bringing your awareness into this time and place...letting go of everything that has come before this moment... relaxing into this experience, feeling yourself grounded in the here and now...letting yourself be held...

Still the body, allow the mind to settle, let yourself be completely at ease as you are carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allowing the words and music to wash over you...Get Ready, My Soul...

## **Chant – *Get Ready, My Soul* by Daniel Nahmod**

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*, and the point of focus for the month of January is *Immerse Yourself*. This morning, we'll be taking a meditative journey into the experience of being *Immersed in Devotion*. By offering Taizé each week as our primary form of Sunday Devotion, we are honoring the Spiritual Practices of *Meditation* and *Prayer*. And by completing each meditative experience with Gratitude Practice and Joyful Expression, we are honoring the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Let's begin by taking a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling, and exhaling slowly...breathing in the healing white light of Spirit, holding the breath in for a moment, allowing the Light to fill every part of your being, and then letting it go, allowing the out breath to carry any tension or resistance with it as it leaves your body. Again, breathe in...let it come...and hold it for a moment, and then let it go. One more time...let it come...allow the Light to fill you...and let it go. Now quickly scan the body, head to toe, letting go of anything that does not serve the Peaceful experience of meditation.

Allow your breathing to be a natural, gentle flow...and then slow it down just a little bit more. We allow the breath to carry us inward, settling into a peaceful state, where Whole-hearted Devotion is the dominant tone, where there is only here and now...feeling into this moment together...attuning ourselves to the high vibration we are creating.

As we slip fully into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge our connection with all Life. The Consciousness that permeates and expresses as all that is, is finding a

point of expression in you, and in all other beings. Sense with me a global web of consciousness, each of us a point of Light...all beings, all over the world who, in this moment, are sitting in meditation or prayer, or attending sacred services, ceremonies, or rituals...all of us in unison, acknowledging the Presence of the Divine...consciously connected by our common purpose...feeling the collective intention that brought us here...feeling the deep communion with that which is bigger than we are...feeling the impulse to grow and evolve that's awakening within us...

By consciously connecting with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered... healing has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

To begin our path of contemplation this morning, I turn to the title of today's Taizé...*Immersed in Devotion*. We don't hear that word much anymore...*devotion*. What does this word mean? From its Latin root, it means *to make sacred*. So, a devotional practice is a time of communing with the Sacred. *Daily Devotionals* have been part of all of the world's great religions for a very long time. Sometimes I think that students of New Thought traditions and Evolutionary Practice think of daily devotionals as part of religious dogma. We prefer to think of ourselves as *spiritual, but not religious*. I think this is an unfortunate misunderstanding...one that has come from our experience, perhaps in childhood and early adulthood, of religious organizations abusing their power and their theology.

As Spiritual Evolutionaries, we are no longer limited by our language. We do not allow words to serve as triggers, to carry its baggage into our hearts and minds. This does not serve the furthering of peaceful life on the planet. Instead, we redefine and reclaim our Sacred Language. The Power of the Word is a creative energy. It will either support and uplift, or it will destroy and tear down.

I find it much more empowering to look at the true meaning of words, from their origins, and decide for myself, from a place of clarity and balance, which ones are useful in my life and Practice. That way, I don't end up throwing out meaningful experiences that support my spiritual growth.

Let's go back to *Spiritual, but not religious*...We are spiritual beings...this is our nature. We couldn't change it if we wanted to. And so, my *spirituality* is simply my awareness, or felt sense, that I am part of something bigger. The word *religious*, from its Latin root, means *that which reconnects*. So, spirituality is my inner knowing that I am part of some greater Truth, and my religion is the particular set of practices that help me reconnect to that Truth. The Truth is, I am both spiritual *and* religious...and if you believes that there are spiritual principles that govern the cosmos, and you strive to make the best use of these principles in your life, then so are you.

I invite you to consider...might it be true that I am both spiritual and religious? What kind of devotional Practices might serve to enhance my life and my growth?

**SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell**

## **Diana**

We allow ourselves to be drawn into the happenings in the world around us...into the drama...into the stories. While we know that there is truly no separation between the material and the spiritual, we tend to lose ourselves...we forget that this is all story...we forget that we are interpreting this story through our own particular lens...we forget that each of us has a different lens, and that mine may not be as clean as it could be...and most importantly, we forget who and whose we are...that we are integrally connected to one another, to the world, and to the Infinite Intelligence that is our Source. Devotional Practice brings us back.

Sadguru says: "True devotion means becoming the hand of the Divine. Whatever comes your way, you will know how to transform it into something beautiful."

Where do the benefits of immersing myself in devotional practice really show up in my life? In the unexpected difficult moments...in the unpleasant surprises. Whether it's having someone insult me, or behave from road rage on the highway, or something much more challenging and serious, like receiving a diagnosis for myself or a loved one. When I spend time engaging in devotional practice, connecting with my Divine Nature...my Higher Angels...I am preparing myself in advance. I am strengthening my values, making a habit of peaceful responses, or of responding with curiosity, rather than reacting from habit. I am cultivating inner fortitude. When the going gets tough, I'm ready. And in between challenges, life is much more Graceful, Peaceful, and Joyful than it would have been.

True devotion means saying a resounding and unconditional *Yes to Life*. It means trusting that whatever is before me is *for* me, and taking the time to find the blessing. True devotion means recognizing that there is no separation between the *material* and the *spiritual*. It is all Divinity taken form. And it is my Practice to treat it as such. In this way, devotional Practice begins as I sit in meditation, prayer, and study, and continues throughout the day, making its way into my interactions, relationships, and commitments. It lends quality to the work I do...it enters every act of service...every gift I offer to another. True devotion goes beyond attitude...it becomes a way of walking in the world.

## **Musical Meditation – *Spirit Run My Life* by Rev. Andy Anderson**

### **Diana**

Devotional Practice has a place in our Spiritual Lives. It feeds our soul's need for ritual, for ceremony...a need that goes back into our ancient history, into our make-up as human beings. We long for connection...to the natural cycles of the Divine Mother, to the miracles of Life that are forever occurring all around us...connection to one another, to our common stories and shared humanity. Devotional Practice can serve as the ritual that takes us back to Source, that reminds us who we are.

We are always part of something larger. True devotion knows this. It does not separate humanity from divinity, matter from spirit, person from nature, me from you. It does not sort us by our ethnic or cultural heritage and traditions, our skin color, our religious beliefs, our level of education, economic status, profession, or personal preferences. True devotion honors the God in everything and everyone, and it honors our uniqueness as Spirit's desire and capacity to express Itself as *all* of it.

Modern philosopher Charles Eisenstein offers this perspective:

“Believing nature and the body to be mere matter, it is no surprise that our culture has, to a very great degree, separated religion out from material life, from life in the world...Dividing one's activities into spiritual and worldly reinforces the very fragmentation that the urge to spirituality seeks to remedy...The separation of body and spirit – and of man and nature – has become a poison.” Not only that, but “it is a profound untruth as well. For the body is not the house of the spirit, it is the spirit taken form. And the world, too, is not the creation of Divinity, it is Divinity as presented to our senses...life in the world is a sacred journey, and matters of the flesh are potential vehicles for spiritual transformation.”

## **SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell**

### **Chris – Meditation**

Please join me in taking a deep breath in... and exhale fully... Again, inhale deeply, letting the air fill your lungs... and exhale, completely releasing all tension or worry... Once more, breathe in deeply, receiving the very Breath of Spirit... and release fully into this meditation... <pause>

God is an Infinite Spirit... everywhere present... expressing in, through, and as everything... visible and invisible... animate or inanimate... It surrounds us... It saturates us... It is our very Being...

We are immersed in this Spirit just as a fish is immersed in water... Like the fish, we are surrounded by Something we'll never fully understand, but cannot live without... It is That within which we live, move, and have our being... and That which lives, moves, and has Its human beingness by means of us... We are meant to live in God, just as the fish is meant to live in water...<pause>

A fish out of water is devoted to only one thing – getting back into the water... her urgency is driven by her devotion to that which supports her and gives her life... Do we have that kind of devotion to our spiritual quest? That level of urgency?

Knowing that God is fully present, right here and right now, let us set an intention to deepen our devotion, and take that intention into the Silence...

## **Silence – 5:00**

With grateful hearts, we give thanks for this time of deep devotion... For the loving support of our Beloved Community... For the opportunity to express our Divine Selves in service to one another... Centered in gratitude, we accept this Divine Gift.

Thank you, God, for everything...

Please affirm with me that our thoughts, words, and actions align with our deepest spiritual intention, and that we are all inspired daily to give full expression to the gifts given us. The light of our souls shines brightly as we express powerful spiritual qualities in the world.

Remaining in this state of deep devotion, we listen for the Divine Inspiration and Truth as it flows through Rev. Diana's message this morning... We receive it with open hearts... with open minds... and deep gratitude...

### **Diana – Invitation to Practice**

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé... we recall that we are giving our focused attention to one quality of Spirit each month. These qualities are all present and available, within us. Attending to these Qualities allows them to grow and expand in our experience, being revealed in every area of our lives, more and more of the time.

For the month of January, we ground ourselves in the God Quality of *Peace*. Being deeply at Peace, no matter what is happening around us, offers us a most valuable gift...the gift of Contentment.

Today, I invite you into a Practice that will lead you to greater Peace. We know that whatever we give our attention to expands in our experience. I ask you to consider:

**What does peace mean to you? to be peaceful?**

**What does it mean to feel at peace? Do you feel peaceful in this moment?**

**I feel peace when...**

**What is one thing I can do for myself today to bring me peace?**

**Today, I vow to live in peace by...**

**Use your vow as an affirmation of Peace in the week to come.**

A life of True Devotion is lived from a Peaceful place, and brings more Peace to the planet. A life of True Devotion knows all of life to be Sacred...Everything is Holy Now.

**Musical Meditation – *Holy Now* by Peter Mayer**

**SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell**

**Diana - Moving into Celebration**

I invite you to gently bring your awareness back to your body...to your senses...to the atmosphere in the room. As you feel ready, allow your eyes to gently open and take in whatever is before you. Move your body a little bit if you'd like, to reconnect your awareness to our shared space.

In order to make our time together complete, we gradually step into gratitude. We give thanks for this prayerful experience, for this time in group meditation and contemplation. We are so deeply grateful to have Spiritual Family, a Spiritual Community, to share our lives with. The word *community*, from its Latin roots, means *common Oneness*.

Author Herman Melville once wrote, "We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results."

We are all connected...we are a Beloved Community. And what a blessing to have a community to grow with...a community that reflects back to us *our growth...our experience...that supports us and brings its caring and compassion to our lives...people of like mind, that we can talk with...and people to receive our Service in the world.*

As you may know, the Mystic Heart Mission we are fulfilling in the world is this: ***Living from our Divinity, we empower our lives, and create authentic, loving Community through heartfelt Study, Service, Celebration, and Prayer.***

The words *authentic, loving Community* are there on purpose...at the heart of our Mission. It's who we are, it's what we do.

Spiritual Community is also important in the fulfilling of our Purpose:

### **We endeavor...**


 to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually empowered lives...

 to bring our most authentic selves in service to others...

 to honor and experience the Divinity of all beings...

 to experience the miraculous nature of our world and everything in it...

 to recognize and live from our Unity...

 to practice Love in order to bring Peace to our world.

Our Community is a living, breathing organism. It is an Independent Spiritual Center that welcomes all who are drawn...open to all faith paths, philosophical points of view, and ways of life that support and uplift the grow and evolution of the planet and its beings. As Spiritual Evolutionaries, we stand on the shoulders of the New Thought Leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Transcendentalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Perennial and Indigenous Wisdom Teachings of the ages. We take the common

threads that run through all Wisdom traditions and carry them forward into something that is useful, practical, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We have so much to share. Our classes and book studies offer tools for individuals who are seeking personal and spiritual growth. Our Sunday Taizé offers the opportunity to share in Prayer and Meditation...but also in **Celebration**. As a community, we give thanks for all of life's blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another.

As you may know, celebration is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. The sacred scriptures of the world tell us that celebration is a holy, creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One. By celebrating, we bring our awareness to our inherent Joy that is ever available. So I thank you for joining us this morning for our time of devotion...of honoring the Divine, honoring Life, honoring ourselves and honoring one another...and sharing in the Joy of Life together.

It's not just anywhere that you can join others in moving through the entire cycle and flow of Spiritual Practices, grounding you in the Six Pillars of a Spiritual Life. In one short hour each week, we open in prayer, move into meditation, are given food for thought and tools for growth, serve the community by our willingness to be present, and offer gratitude and thanksgiving by our joyful celebration and our act of giving. What a powerful way to spend a Sunday morning.

We want to share what we have with others, so I invite you to invite folks to check out our website. The power of invitation is one of the ways we grow our community.

### **Diana – Blessing for the Offering**

And now, we offer you the opportunity to share your financial Good, in support of the Work we are doing in the world. You can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our Donate Button or to find our mailing address.

We also have a Gracious Giving Program for those who would like to make a heartfelt monthly commitment of support so that we can more effectively plan for our growth and our monthly spending. I would be happy to give you more information.

As we move into this time of giving, please take these words into your heart, feeling their True Meaning, and knowing how much we appreciate your gifts:

**As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!**

In introducing our video for today, Amanda Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet in US History, as well as an award-winning writer and cum laude graduate of Harvard University, where she studied Sociology. She has written for the New York Times

and has three books forthcoming with Penguin Random House. And she's 22 years old!

**Offertory Video – *The Hill We Climb* by Amanda Gorman**

**Closing Gratitude and Benediction**

**Practitioner: Brief Invitations**

**Closing Song: *Love Be with You* by Gary Lynn Floyd**

**Close of Service**